



## WATCHING A FILM IS MORE THAN FUN by Carme Porcel

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**BIODATA:** Carme Porcel is a secondary school teacher at IES Abat Oliba, Ripoll. She has been teaching English for 18 years now and has a wide experience in creating her own materials and worksheets. Great supporter of active, motivating and creative English classes. She has taken several methodology courses at Manchester University and Canterbury. She also collaborated in the European project Neueslernen, a new approach to the teaching of languages.

**ABSTRACT:** Watching a film in the English class is more than fun and having a good time. It is a matter of learning and listening to the real English language that British or American people speak in their everyday lives, the language which is alive and kicking in the streets of English-speaking countries.

Have you ever wondered why more than 80% of the population in northern European countries like the Netherlands or Sweden have an excellent command of spoken English? How can young children, teenagers, adults and even some elderly people speak English perfectly when it is not their mother tongue? The answer is in television. Films, cartoons and some other programmes in these countries are all shown in their original version with subtitles.



### I CAME TO A CONCLUSION

Some years ago some of our bachillerato students worked on a biology project with a group of Swedish students. When these Swedish students visited our school, we all, students and teachers, stood gaping in astonishment when we heard them speak English. Their pronunciation and intonation was excellent and so was their fluency. They told us there were many TV programmes in English in their country and they had been watching them subtitled since they were little children.

One day they came to my English class, and we were doing some grammar stuff. I don't remember exactly what it was. Anyway, the thing is that it was then that I realised they didn't know much grammar. My students were far better than them in knowing what the present perfect continuous was or transforming a sentence from active to passive but, unfortunately, none of them could speak English as fluently and with such good pronunciation and intonation as the Swedish students could. I felt frustrated and really disappointed. Up to that day I had always thought I was doing a good job with my students. But that same day I came to the conclusion that there is something more than textbooks, resource books, games, pair-work activities ... when teaching a language. And that's films.

But we don't have to move so far up as Sweden to see how children can learn a language just by listening to it. Something similar is happening in some little Catalan villages with the Spanish language. I live in Ripoll and my husband and I speak Catalan. I have two children and all the family has always talked to them in Catalan. However, they can speak Spanish perfectly. Why is that so? Thanks to cartoons and Disney films.

Both experiences have led me to think that our students can benefit a lot from watching films in English. They can improve their listening and speaking skills, they can enlarge their vocabulary knowledge and they can even make their pronunciation and intonation better. That's why using films in my English classes has been one of the most rewarding experiences so far.



## WHICH FILMS?

It's important to choose films the students will feel motivated to watch. I usually use animated films such as *Ice Age*, *Cars*, or *Madagascar*, along with Harry Potter films, comedies like *Maid in Manhattan*, *Bridget Jones' Diary*, *My Best Friend's Wedding*, or adventure and action films such as James Bond films, *Jumanji*, *The Mummy* ... We're not trying to give a master class on cinema; our aim must be to have our students immersed in the language for a couple of hours, that is, two classes.

Usually I give them the chance to pick from among two or three films and we choose the most popular one. Other times I just choose the film I want them to work on since maybe there's something in the plot or the setting related to what we've been doing in class.



## EVERY TWO UNITS

Every two units we watch a film in class. Our English class has wall-to-wall carpeting, and we have cushions for the students to make them feel more comfortable, so I let them lie on the floor, feel at home and watch the film. We usually devote two classes to the viewing and, after that, we do some exercise worksheets I prepare for them to work on in the next class. With E.S.O. students we use Spanish subtitles whereas Batxillerat students watch the films with English subtitles.

I basically like working with vocabulary and expressions. I also prepare some exercises to work on the plot and the characters. It's very important to adapt the practice to the level of the students and be aware of their abilities and limitations. It's not a question of being very original and inventing new drills and exercises but just being practical and doing something the students will take good profit from.



## I WATCH THE FILM AND TAKE NOTES

The first thing I do is to watch the film carefully by taking notes. I make a list of everyday vocabulary and expressions I want my students to learn. I also write down relevant sentences the characters say, physical and personality features about them, the most important events in the plot and so on. Then it's time to make up the exercises.



## THE WORKSHEETS

I try to make worksheets more attractive by including pictures from the film and very practical exercises so that the students won't get bored doing them. There are many types of exercises you can create. Here are some examples:

### 1. PLOT

- **Plot multiple choice test:** write questions on what happens in the film with three or four possible answers.

Example (NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM)

- 1- The story happens at the
  - a) Natural History Museum in London
  - b) Museum of National History in New York
  - c) Museum of Natural History in New York

- **True / False sentences:** the students have to decide if the facts the sentences state happened or not, and depending on the level you can ask them to correct the wrong information.

Example (CARS)

- 1- McQueen is a rookie car in the Dinoco 400 race.
- 2- In the Dinoco 400 race there was a draw.

- **Fill in gaps:** write a summary of the plot with some gaps for the students to fill in. According to the level of the students you can provide the missing words, you can give them more words than gaps, or you can just get them to guess.

Example: (JUMANJI)

1969 HIT BOX FATHER NIECE NEPHEW  
 DRUMS BURY BOYS SHOE BOARD GAME  
 LATER DISAPPEARS TRAINER BIKE

The film starts in 1869. Two \_\_\_\_\_ are carrying a wooden box in a **cart\*** and want to **get rid of\*** it. So they decide to \_\_\_\_\_ it in the forest. If anybody else finds it ...

“May God have **mercy \*** on his **soul \*\***”, they say.

A hundred years later, in \_\_\_\_\_, in Bratford, New Hampshire, Alan Parrish is riding his \_\_\_\_\_ to his father’s \_\_\_\_\_ factory. Suddenly, a group of boys his age start **chasing\*** him. He manages to get into the factory and meets Carl. He shows him a great revolution in shoes: a \_\_\_\_\_, and he says it will be the “shoe” of the future. Then (...)

- **Answer questions:** write some questions about the plot for them to answer after watching the film.

Example. (THE HOLIDAY)

1. What’s Iris’house like?
2. Why does Amanda want to go away for a holiday?

...

- **Order exercises:** order facts chronologically or order paragraphs in order to build up a summary of the film.
- **Choose relevant words:** give them a list of words and ask them which of them appeared in the film, which of them are relevant in the plot, which of them are related to several facts listed about the plot ...

Example: (DIE ANOTHER DAY)

**Which of these things did you see in the film?**

A bike / A helicopter / A train / A penguin / A yellow sports car / A blue Jaguar / A bus / Big Ben / The Eiffel Tower / A taxi / Waiters skating / A pair of binoculars / A yacht / A special watch / A skateboard / A gun / A shooting ring / A parachute / A snowmotorbike / A history book / A sword / A laser machine / A hovercraft / A bell / A photo album / A mask / A newspaper / A telephone book / A cinema / A teddy bear / A cat / A car race / An underground station .

- **Match beginnings and endings:** match the beginning and end of a sentence describing something which happened in the film.

**2. CHARACTERS**

**Match descriptions and names:** read the descriptions and write the names of the characters. (...)  
 (THE HOLIDAY)

ARTHUR ABBOT / MILES / ETHAN / JASPER / IRIS /  
 AMANDA / GRAHAM / OLIVIA / SOPHIE / MAGGIE

- 1- She works for a newspaper, she lives in Surrey. She has been in love with Jasper for over three years, the worst years of her life, because he doesn’t love her back.
- 2- He is an English book editor. He’s a widower with two daughters and he has a younger sister, Iris.

- **Who said it?:** match the sentences taken from the film to the characters who said them. (CARS)

### Who said it?

- 1- "I hate rusty cars"
- 2- "Race cars don't need headlights because the tracks are always lit"
- 3- "What a race! I didn't see it but they told me it was great"  
(...)

- **Classify vocabulary:** match words to the characters they are related to.

- **Questions:** answer some questions about the main characters.

- **Who did it? Who is it?:** match facts to characters (MADAGASCAR)

- 1- It's his 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary and he's fed up with being in the zoo. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2- He loves living in the zoo and he also loves people. He doesn't like the wild and he hates spiders. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3- She's a beautiful and sweet hippo. \_\_\_\_\_  
(...)

- **Which characters?**

Which of these characters appear in the film? (JOHNY ENGLISH)

Jeronimo	Pascal Wild
Pascal Sauvage	Johny English
Lorna Campbell	Peter Crystal
Bough	James Fandango
The Queen of Spain	Pegasus
The Queen of England	Agent 007
Agent One	James Bond

### 3. VOCABULARY AND EXPRESSIONS

- Match words and expressions to their translations: match vocabulary to the suitable Catalan or English translation. (SHALL WE DANCE?)

**Write the verbs next to the translations:**

Believe / Happen / Faint / Sign up / Gather / Score / Cheer / Turn around / Share / Belong / Find out / Rehearse / Pretend
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- |                 |                  |
|-----------------|------------------|
| 1- Assajar =    | 8- Fer veure=    |
| 2- Girar-se =   | 9- Marcar =      |
| 3- Pertànyer =  | 10- Desmaiar-se= |
| 4- Apuntar-se = | 11- Descobrir =  |
| 5- Animar =     | 12- Passar =     |
| 6- Creure =     | 13- Reunir-se =  |
| 7- Compartir =  |                  |

**Link the following expressions with the catalalan translation**

- |                                    |                                    |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1- That's what we needed           | a. Quan abans millor               |
| 2- Have you ever danced before?    | b. Jas sé prou coses ara!          |
| 3- Harder than it looks, isn't it? | c. Sembla més content ara          |
| 4- To impress the ladies           | d. Aprenc ràpid                    |
| 5- One more time                   | e. Què vols dir?                   |
| 6- He seems happier lately         | f. Això és el que necessitàvem     |
| 7- The rest is up to you           | g. No vol dir res                  |
| 8- Feel free to watch              | h. Has ballat alguna vegada abans? |

- 9- I'm a fast learner
- 10- It doesn't mean anything
- 11- The sooner the better
- 12- What do you mean?
- 13- She couldn't make it tonight
- 14- Do you wanna dance?
- 15- I know enough now!

- i. No ha pogut venir aquesta nit.
- j. És més difícil del que sembla, no?
- k. Vols ballar?
- l. Un altre cop
- m. Mireu sense compromís
- n. Per impressionar les dones
- o. La resta depèn de tu.

- **Match words and definitions**

Complete the definitions with the words in the box: (HARRY POTTER AND THE PRISONER OF AZKABAN)

School stuff / blood / witch / wizard / murderer / a bow /  
broom / laughter / wound / godfather

- 1- What runs through your veins :
- 2- The noun from the verb laugh:
- 3- You do this to a person when you want to greet him/her in a very formal way. Usually done to kings and queens:
- 4- A woman who uses magic:

- **Find synonyms:** provide a box full of vocabulary and ask them to find synonym words or expressions. (CHOCOLAT)

Portrait Show up Wind Soul Dishes Boat Silly Pass away Melt  
Apology

- |                         |                           |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Appear, arrive =     | 6. Picture, painting=     |
| 2. Dissolve, soften =   | 7. Vessel, ship=          |
| 3. Plates, recipes =    | 8. Stupid, foolish =      |
| 4. Die, expire =        | 9. Breeze, air current =  |
| 5. Regret, beg-pardon = | 10. Spirit, inner-being = |

- **Complete sentences:** fill in some sentences about the film with some words they have to choose from a bunch provided at the top of the exercise.

- **Complete a piece of dialogue extracted from the film:** (ICE AGE 2)

EATEN / FEAR / SLOW / FLY / PREY / SURVIVED /  
PET / SELL / EARTH / LIKE / DUDE /  
SWEETIE / FUN / DOG / OFFER / KID /

**Manfred:** So, still think she's the girl for me?

**Sid:** Sure. She's tons of fun, and you're no \_\_\_\_\_ at all. She completes you.

**Eddie:** What if we're the last animals left alive? We'll have to repopulate the \_\_\_\_\_.

**Crash:** How are we supposed to do that? Everyone here is either a \_\_\_\_\_ or our sister.

(...)

- **Work on some specific vocabulary:** sometimes we can work some specific vocabulary according to what the film is about, for instance, cookery, hotels, playing board games, love, magic, museums ...

HOTEL VOCABULARY. Translate these words using a dictionary: (MAID IN MANHATTAN)

Check in  
Check out  
Maid  
Butler  
Guest  
Housekeeping  
A robe

Apron  
Tip  
Employee  
Pressing  
Unpacking  
Butler service  
A closet

- **Match the beginnings and ends of phrases or expressions:** (BRIDGET JONES' DIARY)

- |                 |                   |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1- To make      | a) up             |
| 2- To cause     | b) weight         |
| 3- To smoke     | c) offence        |
| 4- To drink     | d) somebody       |
| 5- To lose      | e) a new book     |
| 6- To quit      | f) wrong          |
| 7- To be        | g) a decision     |
| 8- To launch    | h) like a fish    |
| 9- To introduce | i) smoking        |
| 10- To give     | j) like a chimney |

- **Write a summary of the film using the words given** (NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM)

pharaoh mammoth whale battle single father bubble gum chase job interview  
magic trick ice hockey lion tour guide fire extinguisher cowboy flat tyre arrow  
waxfigure Egyptian curse remote control car Tyranosaurus model train  
pathfinder Native American face slap mummy burglary

- **Write a guided dialogue:** give the students some instructions to write a dialogue with a friend, for example, and they have to use as many of the expressions and vocabulary studied in the film as possible.
- **Write another ending:** excellent exercise for the students to practice their writing skills. Ask them to make up another ending for the story.

These are some of the exercises you can prepare to work with films and some examples taken from my worksheets.



### GIVE IT A TRY

And my suggestion is, don't hesitate, do it, you won't regret it. At the beginning it is lots of work but then you'll be proud of it. Creating your own, personal materials is really satisfying and you will see it is of great help to your students. So, GIVE IT A TRY!

You can download some more activities from our website :



- [Porcel Ice](#)
- [Porcel night at the museum](#)
- [Porcel Jumanji](#)